11,68,709/- representing employer's share of Provident Fund pertaining to different periods from March, 1993 to February, 1995 is outstanding against M/s. Wings Wear Company Private Limited. The Compliance for the period from March, 1995 onward has also not been done by the Company. Necessary legal proceedings under section 7-A of the EPF & MP Act, 1952 to determine the total dues have already been initiated.

A show cause notice in this regard has also been issued to the employer.

South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement

*246. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) has lately been signed;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what specific concessions India has offered to extend for promotion of mutual trade amongst the Member Countries and the expected signatories under the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The agreement establishing the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) was signed on 11th April, 1993 at the 7th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka.

(b) Under the SAPTA Framework Agreement, tariff concessions have to be negotiated amongst member countries product-wise on a step by step basis. The Agreement inter-alia also provides that concessions offered to non-LDC members are to be multilateralised amongst all SAPTA members and those offered to LDC members are to be multilateralised amongst SAPTA LDC members. An Inter-Governmental Group (IGG) was also set up to negotiate the first round of trade concessions.

(c) Negotiations for exchange of first round of tariff concessions under SAPTA were concluded at the 6th meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Trade Liberalisation held at Kathmandu on 20th and 21st April, 1995. In the first round of negotiations, exchange of tariff concessions have been agreed on a small number of tariff lines. India has offered concessions on 106 tariff lines and will receive direct tariff concessions on 43 tariff lines and concessions on 92 tariff lines through multilateralisation of concessions offered under SAPTA by other members. The concessions negotiated will be operationalised after ratification of the Agreement is completed by all member countries. The national schedules of concessions containing the lists of commodities for tariff reduction as negotiated by IGG were approved at the 15th session of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in New Delhi on 30th April and 1st May, 1995. The SAARC Summit held in New Delhi on 2nd to 4th May, 1995 directed that all necessary steps be taken to facilitate ratification by all member states and to operationalise the SAPTA Agreement by the end of 1995.

Public Utility Commission

*247. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to set up a Public Utility Commission which would have representatives from the private voluntary organisations working in the field of consumer education; and

(b) if so, the details of method/criteria for appointing Chairman/Members of the Commission and other terms and conditions to be prescribed by Government?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) In accordance with the recommendation of the Central Consumer Protection Council, the Central Government constituted a working group to examine the necessity of setting up of a Public Utilities Commission. The Report was submitted by the working Group. Public Utilities Commission is a new concept in our country and various ramification of the proposal have to be analysed in depth before arriving at a decision.